CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for providing notices to a user interface concerning status of at least one item in a container, comprising:

   a. a container having a loading opening and a collection opening;

   b. a first sensor connected to the loading opening for generating a first signal when an item is inserted in the container;

   c. a second sensor connected to the collection opening for generating a second signal when the item is removed from the container;

   d. an intelligent device connected to the first sensor and the second sensor for receiving the first signal from the first sensor and the second signal from the second sensor, wherein the intelligent device generates a first intelligent device signal and a second intelligent device signal, respectively;

   e. a communication system in contact with the intelligent device, for receiving the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal, wherein the communication system is selected from the group: radio, cellular, fiber optic, satellite, and wires;

   f. a software interface in contact with the communication system that processes the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal from the intelligent device; and

   g. a user interface in contact with the software interface that receives the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal processed from the software interface.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the item used is a package.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the loading opening and the collection opening are one opening.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device is a remote terminal unit (RTU).

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device further comprises a counter to provide information on sensor activity on a timed basis to the user interface.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an antenna for sending the first intelligent device signal and the second intelligent device signal to the software interface.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the software interface communicates to a user using a member of the group: a file transfer protocol, an internet home page, email, pager, telephone, and voice activated auto-dialer.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the second sensor is a manually operated sensor.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the container further comprises a lock forming a locked container.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the container is a member of the group: a common carrier drop box, a group mail collection site, a federal post office box, private postal box.

11. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first sensor and the second sensor are selected from the group: electromechanical switches, magnetic switches, optical switches, infrared switches, pressure sensors, strain gauges, analytical sensors, and ultrasonic switches.

12. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device is selected from the group: digital remote terminal unit, discrete remote terminal unit, and analog remote terminal unit and combinations thereof.

13. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the communication system is selected from the group: Internet, intranet, LAN, and peer-to-peer network.

14. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a third sensor used to ascertain the weight of the item disposed in the container, and wherein the third sensor is in communication with

the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a weight notification to the user interface.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an analyzer to monitor and evaluate container sensor activity.

16. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a fourth sensor used to ascertain whether the container has been tampered with, and wherein the fourth sensor is in communication with the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a tampered with notification to the user interface.

17. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a fifth sensor used to detect hazardous materials in the container, wherein the fifth sensor is in communication with the intelligent device and the intelligent device is adapted to provide a hazardous material notification to the user interface.

18. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a counter to store sensor activity and report to the user interface on a timed basis.

19. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the intelligent device is a remote terminal unit (RTU).

20. A security system for providing security notice to a user interface concerning a container, comprising:

a. a container having a loading opening and a collection opening;

b. a first sensor connected to the loading opening for generating a signal;

c. a second sensor connected to the collection opening for generating a second signal;

d. an intelligent device connected to the first sensor and the second sensor for receiving the first signal and the second signal, wherein the intelligent device generates a first intelligent device signal and a second intelligent device signal, respectively;

e. a communication system in contact with the intelligent device, for receiving the intelligent device signals, wherein the communication system is selected from the group: radio, cellular, fiber optic, satellite, and wires;

f. a software interface in contact with the communication system that processes the signals from the intelligent device; and

g. a user interface in contact with the software interface that receives the processed signals from the software interface.

21. The security system of claim 20, wherein the intelligent device further comprises a counter to provide information on sensor activity on a timed basis to the user interface.